

REMARKS

Please reconsider the application in view of the above amendments and the following remarks. Applicant thanks the Examiner for carefully considering this application and for the courtesy extended to Applicant's representative during the telephone interview of June 8, 2007.

Status of the Claims

Claims 25-49 are pending. Upon entry of this amendment, claims 25 and 27 are independent. The remaining claims depend, directly or indirectly, from claims 25 and 27.

Claim Amendments

Claims 25 and 27 have been amended to clarify the support relationship between the phase connector and the cover. Specifically, claim 25 now recites that "the phase connector is supported on the cover." Claim 27 has been amended to be in independent form by incorporating the limitations of claim 25 and amending the limitation of claim 27 to recite that the phase connector is supported on a first projection extending from the cover. No new matter has been added by these amendments.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 25 and 26 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Publication No. 2001/0022477 ("Ishida"). To the extent that the Examiner maintains the rejection with respect to amended claim 25, that rejection is respectfully traversed.

As amended, claim 25 recites, in part, that the phase connector is supported on the cover. Ishida neither shows nor suggests a phase connector that is supported on a cover. To

“support” is commonly used in the relevant art to describe a structural relationship between two components. The relationship is more than mere physical contact, with the two primary definitions being “to bear the weight of, especially from below” and “to hold in position so as to keep from falling, sinking, or slipping.” *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 4th Ed., Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004.

The present application uses “support” throughout the specification to describe similar structural relationships. Ishida uses the term as well, but never with respect to a phase connector and a cover. In particular, with reference to Figure 2, Ishida states that “[t]he frame 4 supports a rectifier 5, a cover 6 and a regulator 8 on a rear side by a plurality of through bolts 10 and nuts 9 (*Ishida*, ¶ [0021]).” A close look at the cross-section shown in Figure 2 shows that the rectifier 5 is sandwiched in place along with the cover 6. Ishida accurately describes the components as being supported on the frame 4, not the other way around. Ishida is silent on any support relationship between the connector 82 and the rectifier 5, nor is any such relationship shown by the figures. Thus, assuming *arguendo* that the connector 82 was supported by the rectifier 5 as alleged by the Examiner, the connector 82 would still not be supported by the cover 6, as recited in claim 1.

The connector 82 of Ishida is considered to be a component of the regulator 8, which itself is “mounted on the frame 4,” meaning that the frame 4 supports the connector 82 (*Ishida*, ¶ [0025] – [0026]). No such support relationship is shown or suggested between the connector 82 and the cover 6. With respect to the connector 82, the cover 6 only provides an opening 61 through which a mating connector passes (*Ishida*, ¶ [0032]).

The claim construction currently being applied by the Examiner is unduly broad to the extent that the entire limitation regarding support of the phase connector is read out of

claim 25. As discussed above, more than an indirect connection between two components is required to provide support as the term is understood by those having ordinary skill in the art. Under the current claim construction, any components within the alternator would support another component in some indirect manner. This interpretation improperly makes the last limitation of claim 25 superfluous.

In view of the above, Ishida neither shows nor suggest the claimed invention as recited in claim 25. Thus, claim 25 is patentable over Ishida. By virtue of its dependence, claim 26 is patentable for at least the same reasons. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 27-45 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being obvious over Ishida in view of U.S. Publication No. 2004/0256928 (“Kondo”). To the extent that the Examiner maintains the rejection with respect to the amended claims, that rejection is respectfully traversed.

As discussed above with respect to claim 25, Ishida neither shows nor suggests the claimed invention. Kondo does not provide that which Ishida lacks with respect to claim 25. Specifically, Kondo neither shows nor suggests a phase connector supported on a cover, as recited in claim 25. Further, Kondo neither shows nor suggests that “the phase connector is supported on a first projection extending from the cover,” as recited in claim 27. In contrast to the claimed invention, with reference to Figure 2, Kondo discloses a phase connector 806 that is attached to a mounting portion 802, which is fixed to a rear frame 3b (*Kondo*, ¶ [0024]). Thus, the phase connector is supported on the frame, not the cover.

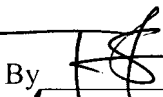
In view of the above, Ishida and Kondo, whether considered separately or in combination, neither show nor suggest the claimed invention as recited in claims 25 and 27. Thus, claims 25 and 27 are patentable over Ishida and Kondo. Dependent claims are patentable for at least the same reasons. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Conclusion

Applicant believes this reply is fully responsive to all outstanding issues and places this application in condition for allowance. If this belief is incorrect, or other issues arise, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned or his associates at the telephone number listed below. Please apply any charges not covered, or any credits, to Deposit Account 50-0591 (Reference Number 17170/010001)

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Respectfully submitted,

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